



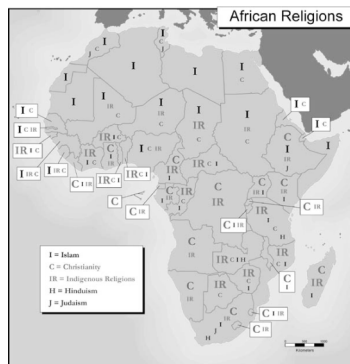
## Religion in Africa

### An Overview



### Overview

- Religion in Africa very diverse
- Traditional religions vary across continent
- Islam and Christianity very prominent - many times forced upon African



### Indigenous Religions

- No single word for *religion* in most African languages
- Religion was not separate from everyday life, part of every action and event



### Indigenous Religions

- Like most religions, African religion sought to find order in the universe, explain good and evil, define behaviors, create rituals, and determine afterlife
- Many were polytheistic – with one major god and many sub-deities
- Priests oversaw shrines and religious ceremonies, and communicated with spirits



### Role of the God

- These characteristics are general
- All powerful creator of humans and the world
- Not in direct contact with world and humans
- Spirits go between physical world and spiritual world



## *Spirits*

- Very much like angels
- Ancestor spirits - deceased relatives who provide guidance and protection
- Respect towards ancestors important



## *Spirits*

- Nature spirits - some tribes believe spirits live in nature, animals, etc.
- Evil spirits – cause misfortune and bad events



## *Islam*

- Founded by Mohammad in 610 AD in Saudi Arabia
- Allah (God) spoke through Mohammad and revelations are recorded in Quran (Koran)
- God of Abraham – same as Judaism and Christianity
- Has same prophets: Abraham, Moses, and Jesus
- Mohammad last prophet



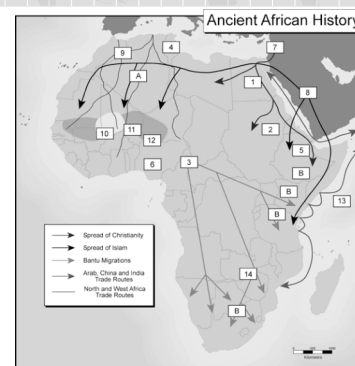
## *Spread of Islam*

- Initially crossed Red Sea from Saudi Arabia
- Arab traders brought Islam across Sahara and to North Africa and down to sub-Saharan Africa



## *Spread of Islam*

- Conversions occurred gradually
- Ghana had Muslim Advisors
- Mali and Songhai became Muslim kingdoms

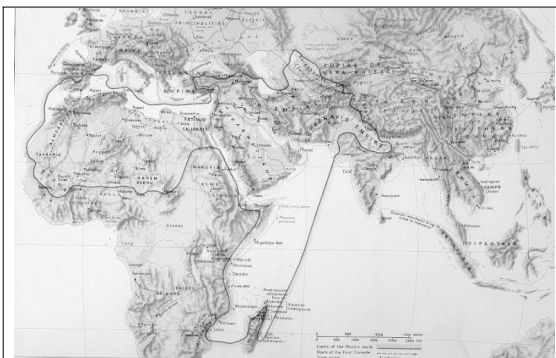




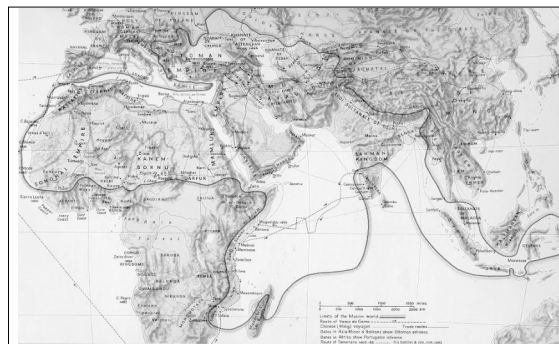
Map of the Muslim World, 661 AD



Map of the Muslim World c.A.D.900



Map of the Muslim World c.A.D. 1100



Map of the Muslim World c.A.D. 1500



### *Islam in Africa*

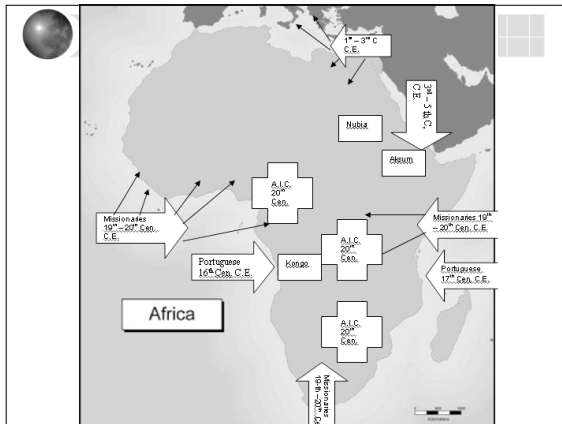
- Accepted more readily because it did not dismiss indigenous religious beliefs
- Tolerated non-Muslim beliefs if they did not contradict the Five Pillars
- Education – Islamic scholars built universities, developed algebra, astrolab
- Helped those in need



### *Christianity in Africa*

- Spread to North Africa during Roman Empire
- Egypt and Axum early Christian Empires
- In 15th century Portuguese began spreading Christianity along coast
- Kongo Empire became Christian in 1491





## Colonialism and Christianity

- Christian missionaries accompanied colonial rulers
- Belief that Christian Africans would appreciate European rule and cooperate
- Missionaries spread word *en mass* and quickly

## Colonialism and Christianity

- Brought education so Africans could read bible
- Christianity rejected indigenous beliefs - believed Africans were primitive
- Generally avoided Muslim controlled areas – Colonizers tried to make alliances with Muslims

## Christianity in Africa

- Different African Christian groups separated themselves from European missionaries – established their own Christian churches
- Africans were tired of racist attitude held by most Europeans
- Blended African cultural traditions with Christianity



## Religion in Africa Conclusion

- Numerous indigenous religions still observed
- Islam initially accepted more willingly because it was tolerant of traditional religions
- Christianity spread during colonialism